

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 SY-04 USSS-00

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1428

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN HK

SUBJ: CIVAIR --- AIRPORT SECURITY

REF: STATE 10749; HONG KONG 6022

1. SUMMARY: TWA STILL CONCERNED ABOUT NON-FILM SAFE X-RAY EQUIPMENT USED IN AIRPORT SECURITY CHECKS. PLANS TO TAKE MATTER UP WITH OTHER U.S. CARRIERS AND PUSH FOR REPLACING WITH MORE ACCEPTABLE EQUIPMENT. THEY HAVE REQUESTED CONGEN TO TAKE UP MATTER WITH HKG SECURITY AND CIVAIR OFFICIALS WHICH CONGEN RELUCTANT TO DO UNLESS OTHER CHANNELS EXHAUSTED. THIS APPEARS TO BE , STRICTLY SPEAKING, MORE OF A MATTER OF MARKETING OR CUSTOMER RELATIONS THAN OF SECURITY. ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE PROVIDE GUIDANCE AS TO APPROPRIATE STANCE OF CONGEN IF MATTER NOT RESOLVED BY CARRIERS. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGEN OBSERVER ATTENDED MEETING WITH TWA REGIONAL SECURITY MANAGER, HARRIS, AND HEADQUARTERS SECURITY MANAGER, RIGGS, WITH PAN AM STATION MANAGER TONG. THEY REVIEWED HISTORY OF TORR X-RAY EQUIPMENT WHICH IS NOT FILM SAFE AND RISKS FOGGING FILM IN PASSENGERS' HAND LUGGAGE. IN MAY, TWA REQUESTED SECURAIR TO CEASE X-RAY INSPECTION OF ITS PASSENGERS' HAND LUGGAGE, SECURAIR REPLIED THAT

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MATTER SHOULD BE TAKEN UP WITH HKG WHICH HAS QUOTE

SUPPLIED AND LICENSED EQUIPMENT UNQUOTE.

3. SECURAIR IS A PRIVATE FIRM. IT HAS INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS WITH THE CARRIERS. IT IS PAID HK \$1.17 PER BOARDED PASSENGER AND IS UNDER THE VERBAL DIRECTION OF THE AIRPORT MANAGER. IT HAS STANDARD LANGUAGE IN ITS CONTRACTS WITH CARRIERS TO THE EFFECT THAT IT WILL NOT EMPLOY EQUIPMENT THAT WILL DAMAGE FILM. IN THE OPINION OF THE CONGEN, THIS PROVISION IS PROBABLY UNENFORCEABLE SINCE--- DESPITE THE VAGUENESS OF THE CHAIN OF COMMAND-- SECURAIR IS OPERATING AS AN AGENT OF THE HKG.

4. TWA ASKED CONGEN TO TAKE UP MATTER OF X-RAY EQUIPMENT WITH HKG. WE REPLIED THAT WE ARE RELUCTANT TO DO SO AT THIS POINT FOR FOLLOWING REASONS:

A. USG INTERVENTION AT THIS EARLY STAGE RISKS ENGENDERING HARDENING OF HKG POSITION. HKG OFFICIALS ARE OFTEN RESENTFUL OF AMERICAN ADVICE AND ANYTHING THAT RESEMBLES IMPOSITION OF U.S. LAWS, REGULATIONS, OR POLICIES ON HK SOIL. THERE ARE STILL EMOTIONAL OVERTONES FROM DEPORTEE INCIDENT REPORTED IN HONG KONG 6952 AND OUR CARPING ON X-RAY EQUIPMENT COULD SEEM LIKE THE LAST STRAW AT THIS TIME.

B. FAA HAS NOT YET EVALUATED THE TORREX II AND WE HAVE LITTLE ARGUMENTATION OTHER THAN POTENTIAL CUSTOMER RELATIONS AND CLAIMS PROBLEMS OF TWA.

C. THERE IS , AS YET, NO STATED CONSENSUS OF ALL AMERICAN CARRIERS IN HK.

D. AT PRESENT , THE EQUIPMENT IS USED VERY SELECTIVELY ON WRAPPED PARCELS WHICH IT WOULD BE INCONVENIENT FOR PASSENGERS TO UNWRAP, OTHER CARRY-ON LUGGAGE IS PHYSICALLY INSPECTED. THE MACHINES HAVE SIGNS IN FIVE LANGUAGES WARNING OF POTENTIAL FILM DAMAGE. NO CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED TO DATE THAT CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE HK EQUIPMENT.

E. TWA HAS THE CHANNELS OF THE BOARD OF AIRLINE REPRESENTATIVES (BAR), THE AIRPORT SECURITY COMMITTEE, AND THE TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE TO PRESS FOR CHANGES.

5. TWA HAS DECIDED TO PRESS THROUGH ABOVE -MENTIONED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CHANNELS FOR REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING EQUIPMENT WITH LOW DOSAGE UNIT COUPLED WITH CONVEYER SYSTEM. THIS IS COMPATIBLE WITH EVENTUAL HKG GOAL OF 100 PERCENT X-RAY INSPECTION OF HAND BAGGAGE IN LIEU OF PHYSICAL INSPECTION. TWA ALSO WISHES TO HEAD OFF INTEREST IN SYSTEM BEING DEVELOPED BY BRITISH AIRWAYS WHICH INCLUDES SOPHISTICATED SNIFFING DEVICE FOR DETECTING NITROGLYCERIN BASED EXPLOSIVES BUT ALSO INCLUDES HOT (I.E. FILM FOGGING) X-RAY.

IF THIS FAILS , TWA WILL FALL BACK TO MINIMUM POSTION
OF TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR INSPECTING ITS OWN PASSENGERS'
HAND LUGGAGE. IN THE MEANTIME, CONGEN IS CONSULTING WITH
OTHER U.S. CARRIERS TO DETERMINE THEIR DEGREE OF SUPPORT
FOR ENSURING INSTALLATION OF FILM -SAFE EQUIPMENT.
ALSO DISCUSSING THIS WITH HK TOURIST ASSN AS TO POSSIBLE
IMPACT OF SPOILED FILM ON HK'S REPUTATION AMONG TOURISTS.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: IN CASE TWA FAILS TO REALIZE AIM
OF REPLACING EQUIPMENT WITH ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE OR
OF OBTAINING AUTHORITY TO SCREEN ITS OWN PASSENGERS,
CONGEN WOULD APPRECIATE CLEAR GUIDANCE ON WHAT STANCE
TO TAKE WITH HKG OFFICIALS. WE ASSUME FAA EVALUATION
OF TORREX II FORTHCOMING IN NEXT TWO MONTHS. WE DO
NOT ASSUME OTHER U.S. CARRIERS (WHO HAVE NOT INCORPORATED
FILM-SAFE SCREENING IN THEIR SALES PROMOTION) WILL FEEL
AS STRONGLY AS TWA ON THIS MATTER.

7. FYI--- AIRPORT COORDINATION PROBLEMS APPEAR TO US
BE EXACERBATED BY HARRIS WHO SEEMS TO BE CARRYING
ON A PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL VENDETTA WITH KEN BARNES,
OF CATHAY PACIFIC, WHO PROCURED EXISTING EQUIPMENT
(STATE 67293). CONGEN'S CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF AIRPORT
SECURITY CONTINUES TO BE (PER HONG KONG 6953) THAT,
DESPITE SERIOUS GAPS, AUTHORITIES ARE TAKING SUBJECT
SERIOUSLY AND GENUINELY STRIVING FOR ACCEPTABLE
MEASURES.
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